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SSS launches an investigation into racial discrimination and national animosity



Statement by SSS.

BY ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

According to the operative information, there are groups of individuals and a number of citizens in Georgia who are trying to stir up strife between ethnic Georgians and Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions. These people are actively using certain issues in the negative context, which, if falsely represented as patriotic motives, pose a threat. These individuals are digging into issues within the competence of the state and the government, and are trying to use the issues raised in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions to stir up a conflict.

By spreading false and aggressive calls in this direction, the group of individuals is trying to create a rift between the ethnic Georgian and Azerbaijani citizens of the region, which is followed by statements and

actions that undermine national honor and dignity. They try to present the situation in their public statements or ideologies as if ethnic Georgian population is given preference to other Georgian citizens in relation to ethnic minorities, which further increases the risks of a conflict.

SSS does not name 'the group of individuals,' but the article under investigation states that the action is aimed at overthrowing the national division.

The State Security Department of the State Security Service is investigating racial discrimination in order to reduce animosity and to protect the human rights.

The agency has launched an investigation under Article 142, Part 3, Subparagraph A of the Criminal Code of Georgia.



Racial discrimination issues intensifying in Georgia.

Minister of Environmental protection and agriculture of Georgia meets the representatives of diplomatic corps, international organisations and the non-governmental sector

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Minister of Environmental protection and agriculture of Georgia, Levan Davitashvili together with the Chairperson of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee, Nino Tsilosani met the representatives of diplomatic corps, international organisations and the non-governmental sector, on June 1st. The Minister discussed current and future legislative reforms in the direction of environmental protection. The meeting was also attended by the ambassador of Czech to Georgia, Petr Mikyska.

The minister paid attention to the new Forest Codex. As

Davitashvili stated, the issues of protecting the environment are one of the primary priorities of the government and the act of legislation (The Forest Codex), which was recently approved, is crucial and instills the principles of forest's sustainable management, which takes forest management to the whole new level. He also mentioned that the government has just adopted normative producer expanded duties, which is also a significant document and creates an opportunity of developing a circular economy- Green economy. In the current year, together with parliament, we will proceed to work on the initiatives and acts of legislations actively, in which the help of donor organisations is



Attendants on the meeting held by the Ministry of Environmental protection and agriculture of Georgia.



The ambassador of Czech to Georgia, Petr Mikyska congratulates Georgians on the successful adoption of the document.

very valuable," said Davitashvili.

At the meeting, the minister also talked about the amendments in the law On Ambient Air Protection and noted that protecting ambient air will be accomplished in compliance with the European principles. He also referred to the matters of waste managing, water resource managing, establishing and enlarging nature reserves and several other environmental protection initiatives and re-

forms.

The ambassador of Czech to Georgia, Petr Mikyska congratulated Georgians on adopting The Forest Codex and expressed the support for further partnership in the name of his country. As he said, it is notable that according to the mentioned document, close attention will be paid to 3 million hectares of forest, which is a direct provision of a healthy environment for people. He also highlighted the successful cooperation of The Ministry of Envi-

ronmental protection and the Parliament of Georgia and estimated their joint work as 'welcoming and exemplary.'

In May, the Parliament renewed the Forest Codex which defines compulsory rules and regulations in terms of taking care of the forest. The main purpose of the legislation is to "maintain and protect the ecosystems and to reasonably use social and economical benefits."

The International Day for Protection of Children in Georgia

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

In regards to June 1st, The International Day for Protection of Children, political unity Lelo for Georgia organised a symbolic procession 'Lelo for children- a new power, new hope.' Participants congratulated the children in Tbilisi as well as in different regions of Georgia. Aside from this, the representatives of the authorities shared statements amid protecting children and their rights.

Public defender of Georgia (Ombudsman), shared a statement regarding the influence of



COVID-19 on the children. According to the statement, under the world pandemic, risk of poverty in children, child abuse and neglect have increased. The Ombudsman paid attention to the effect of quarantine mode and isolation and notes that his factors have become additional hindrances that negatively affect the psychological condition of children.

"The pandemic has made the situation of vulnerable groups of children worse. Juveniles with disabilities, or those in poverty, state care, religious boarding schools, or on the street should be provided with an effective support system by the State in accordance with their needs and risks," reads the statement.

According to the Facebook

Weather

Tuesday, June 2

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 28°C
Night Clear
Low: 16°C

Wednesday, June 3

Day Clear
High: 30°C
Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 15°C

A symbolic event for children organised by political unity- Lelo for Georgia

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published by
The Messenger

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All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.1172; Euro - 3.4626; GBP - 3.8613; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.4772; Swiss Franc - 3.2420

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Stopped international travel, tourism and universal restrictions are hitting everyone, small, medium and large businesses.

According to preliminary estimates by the world's largest tour operators, about 8,000 people will be unemployed during the post-coronavirus period. Aviation is also in crisis, and for example one of the largest German airlines in the world, Lufthansa, is asking the government for help to survive and stay in the market. According to a study by the World Council of Travel and Tourism, about 10% of the world's gross domestic product and jobs are generated by the tourism sector.

After all, the crisis is relative, so the most critical situation is in the countries that rely on the tourist dollar. A 25% reduction in tourism revenues will reduce average GDP by 7%, compared to 16% for the Maldives and Seychelles. However, the situation is not good either on the European continent and the European Parliament estimates that the tourism industry is losing about a billion euros.

While the only way to save a business is to open borders and have as many international travelers as possible, it is still the biggest risk that a new wave of coronavirus will start. The fact is that despite the development of safety measures, the virus still continues to exist and travel is becoming increasingly risky.

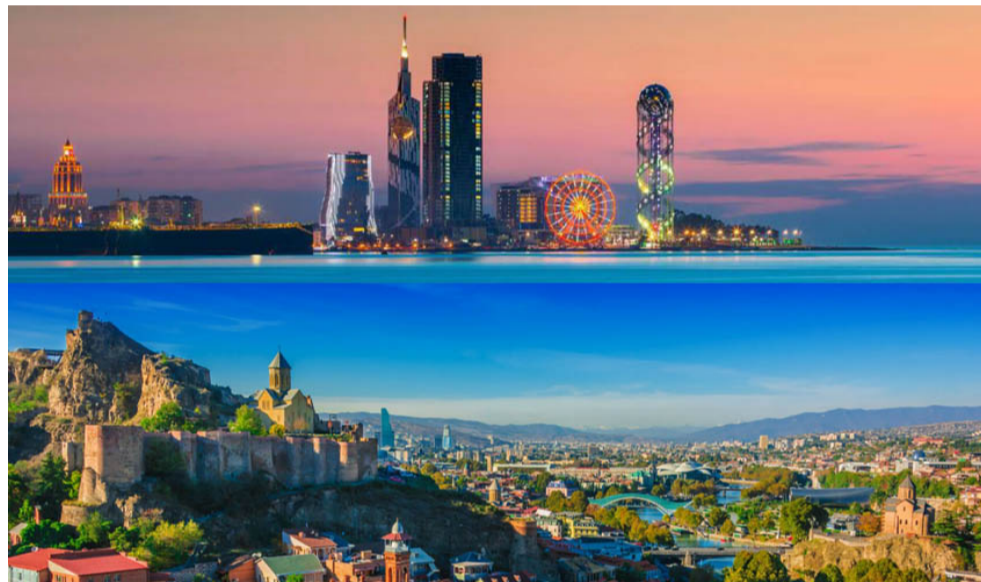
In 2019, Georgia received \$3.3 billion from international tourism. In fact, the tourism industry is the industry most affected by the pandemic. "According to the basic scenario, tourism revenues in Georgia will be reduced by 65% this year," said in a study published by TBC Capital. The authors of the study believe that in the case of the optimistic scenario (rapid recovery), the annual decrease in tourism revenue may be 55%, but according to the pessimistic scenario (late recovery) -80%.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, said that due to the situation created by the pandemic, three scenarios for the restoration of tourism will be discussed. The first - the borders between the countries will be opened at the end of June and international flights will be resumed worldwide; later, international air traffic will resume at the end of September, and then, the worst-case scenario - 70-90% of international flights will be resumed at the end of December. According to him, the most realistic and

Prospects for safe tourism 2020



CNN: 2020 will be a catastrophic year for the tourism sector. Photo: EPA/ANGELO CARCONI



Tbilisi, Batumi named as top coronavirus-safe destinations in Europe in 2020.

optimistic of these 3 scenarios is probably the second option: "In September, of course, we will not be able to return to the mark where the tourism sector was in February of this year, but we will return somewhere with a 50% decrease, which means that we will go back 7 years." He said that 100-120 million jobs are at risk worldwide, adding that a more accurate forecast could be made by UNWTO in August.

For reference, in 2019, international tourism revenues were \$ 1.5 trillion. According to a recent UNWTO forecast,

tourism revenues are expected to fall by \$ 910 billion to \$ 1.2 trillion this year.

Pololikashvili thinks that the state should provide support and subsidize business operators operating in the tourism sector during the crisis period for at least 3 months: "This is a politically difficult and costly decision, but in our opinion, it is the only way to maintain the balance and the situation that our countries have."

The Secretary General of the World Tourism Organisation names the areas where the state should support the rep-

resentatives of the tourism sector so as not to face liquidity problems; in dealing with commercial banks, as many of them have obligations to banks; and to subsidize their employees and help them avoid losing their jobs.

He said the UNWTO's daily work process with international financial institutions to support member states and develop recommendations.

According to Kakha Samkurashvili, a senior analyst at Galt & Taggart, there will be a 60% decrease in tourists in Georgia.

"We can position ourselves as a safe country, but I think there is no such thing as a safe country today. Risks are everywhere, so it is impossible to neutralize them to the end," Samkurashvili claims.

Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia has recently announced that in order to enter the Georgian border, a foreign citizen must have passed the COVID-19 PCR test 72 hours in advance. He also mentioned that there will be opportunities inside the country to take PCR tests for rare cases.

PM says this will increase the strength of the Georgian tourism brand, adding the Covid Free status to the country.

The Minister of Health has issued 15th Amendment to the recommendations for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace specify the requirements for tour operators and guides, which they will have to fulfill when serving tourists.

Recently, 2 Georgian cities of Tbilisi and Batumi were named the safest place to travel in Europe in 2020 amongst the cities selected by European Best Destinations, a travel website developed to promote culture and tourism in Europe.

The Washington Post and CNN have already spoken of Georgia's plans to reopen its economy and boost tourism development after the coronavirus pandemic.

In its article about Georgia the Washington Post says that the country 'rebrands as a holiday haven from the pandemic'. Discussing which international destinations are reopening to tourists, CNN says Georgia "was experiencing a tourism boom before the coronavirus pandemic, with 5 million travellers visiting in 2019, a 7% increase on the previous year."

Georgia is planning to resume domestic tourism starting June 15th and receive international tourists starting July 1st.

The International Day for Protection of Children in Georgia

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post published on the personal account of the Head of the government administration, Natia Mezvrishvili, with the assistance of partner international organisations, non-governmental sector and Public Defender, "the government has done a lot for children in the last few years, especially for the ones in the justice system." She noted that Georgia has one of the most decent legislation worldwide, in the direction of child defence and the whole effort should be focused on its proper execution.

Mezvrishvili believes that the prosperity of children, overcoming poverty, corresponding care to the disabled children and providing them with fair social conditions, accessibility to education, protecting their best interests whilst executing justice and fighting against child abuse should always remain on the agenda.

The Prosecutor's office of Georgia releases a statement as well. According to

the statement, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia is actively working on the development of a justice system suitable for children. An environment suitable for a child implies appropriate legislation, specialised professionals, and infrastructural arrangements to prevent re-victimization of the victim juvenile during the proceedings. They find it important to administer justice in accordance with the best interests of the juvenile, both to the witness and the victim juveniles, and to juveniles in conflict with the law.

As the statement notes, it is extremely important for them to ensure prompt and effective justice for juveniles. For this purpose, the Prosecutor's Office has developed a mechanism for the diversion of juveniles and the monitoring of criminal cases of juvenile offenders, within the framework of which the criminal cases are systematically studied and the analysis of the results of justice is presented to the public.



Head of the government administration, Natia Mezvrishvili, notes that Georgia has one of the most decent legislation in terms of child protection, worldwide.